

Notes and Quotes - Solitude, Silence, and Prayer

Lk 5:15-16 - ¹⁵ Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Pick up the pace of your services. Television has permanently shortened the attention span of Americans. When the minister of music finishes a song, he walks over and sits down. Fifteen seconds later, the pastor thinks about getting up. Finally, he slowly moves to the pulpit and welcomes the people. By this time the unbelievers have already fallen asleep. **Work on minimizing transitional times.** As soon as one element ends, another should begin." - Pastor of a very large church on the mainland

Thomas Merton said it well: "**Silence is the language of God -- all else is poor translation.**" Silence is the training ground for the art of listening... In our culture, silence and stillness have been equated with wasting time, doing nothing, being lazy. NOT TRUE. Engaging the silence may be one of the most important and productive things you can do for spiritual deepening. Think of it this way -- **the silence of meditation is not the silence of a graveyard; it is the silence of a garden growing.** Many of you are gardeners, and you know that when you're standing in the middle of a quiet garden, that silence does not mean that the garden is dead. Far from it. An intense activity is going on in the ground that will later take the form of buds, blossoms, and fruit. So, too, in silent meditation. There is divine formation and activity going on beneath our consciousness that will produce fruit -- particularly in the areas of compassion and creativity. It is analogous to Jesus' parable of the mustard seed. The growth of that tiny seed into a large mustard tree is a slow, slow process -- it can't be rushed; it can scarcely even be observed; it must be trusted. - Linda R. Douty

Eccl 5:1-2 – Guard your steps when you go to the house of God; to draw near to listen is better than to offer **the sacrifice of fools**. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few

Prov. 10:19 - ¹⁹ When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.

Silence is nothing less than the mother of the wisest thoughts - Diadochus (an ancient Christian monk)

Prayer of the Examen: 2 Parts (cf. Ps 139:23-24 and Ps 119:59)

- **Examen of Consciousness** is a time where we reflect, examine, and discover how God has been *Present* to us throughout the day and how we have *Responded* to His presence.
- **Examen of Conscience** is a time where we discover, acknowledge, and uncover those areas in our life that need confession, cleansing, and healing.

Suggested Guidelines to the Prayer of the Examen*

Examen comes from the Latin referring to the tongue or weight indicator on a balance of scale, hence **conveying the idea of an accurate assessment of the true situation.**

1. Preparation:

- Move toward Silence and Stillness
- Take a few moments in Centering Prayer - and control your breathing
- Acknowledge God's presence with you. Offer yourself and this time to God.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and mind.

2. Review the last 24 hours or an Event or Period of Time:

- Review the past 24 hours or choose an event or period of time for examination.
- Beginning with the present moment, let each hour of the past day gently pass by your experience. Linger as you remember the experiences.
- You can even just focus in on a period of time in the day (that office meeting, when you were with your kids, etc.)
- With generous pauses between questions, notice:
 - What have you taken for granted during this day or in the event or experience?
 - What feeling and thoughts are emerging as you look back over the past 24 hours?
- Reflect on the ways in which God *was present* to you AND *how you responded* to Him (positively or negatively)?
 - Where do you see God at work? Did you see Him in your joy, fears, suffering, work, play? In acts of service, study? In someone's encouragement, correction, or prayer? In an event, person, sound, sunset, music, or action?
 - When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life?
 - When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were resisting God's presence and action? Are there actions or thoughts that require God's forgiveness? The pardon of others?
- In what ways do you believe God may be calling you to new awareness, a change of heart or a different action?

3. Close with a Word of Thankfulness to God:

- Thank God for whatever you have received
- Notice a sense of gratitude for one or two particular ways that God was present to you during this period.
- Ask for the grace, perseverance, and courage to live out the change that needs to be made as a result of your Examen
- Express these feelings through journaling, body posture, words, in some art medium, singing, etc.
- If possible, share your reflections and discoveries with a good friend or your Soul Care group

Frequency - Try doing this prayer exercise once or twice a day - or at least once weekly

• These are adapted from - "Prayer of the Examen" - <http://www.jpberkeley.org/examen.asp>